

PACHYMERUS THORACICUS PREVETT (COLEOPTERA:
BRUCHIDAE), ITS HOST PALM AND PLACES
OF OCCURRENCE¹

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ABSTRACT

Pachymerus thoracicus Prevett (*P. "coperniciae"*, a *nomen nudum*) is known from seeds of only one species of palm, *Copernicia alba* Morong, which is restricted to southwestern Mato Grosso in Brazil and adjacent portions of neighboring countries. The 2 specimens cited in the original description as being from Bahia were incorrectly labeled, as demonstrated from a search of pertinent documents. Therefore, records from northeastern Brazil and from other species of *Copernicia* are suppressed.

The bruchid *Pachymerus thoracicus* was described by Prevett (1966) from 7 adults of which 5 emerged from seeds of the palm *Copernicia australis* Beccari from Paraguay. The other 2 specimens were mounted on the same pin with label data as follows: "4615/Estado da Bahia, Brazil. G. Bondar Leg./Fruits of *Copernicia orientalis*/Com. Inst. Ent. Coll. No. 11290/Pres. by Com. Inst. Ent. B. M. 1949-512".

According to Bondar (1964), there are in Brazil only 2 species of *Copernicia*: *C. cerifera* (Arruda Camara) Mart., the true wax palm or "carnaúba", which grows in the boggy "valados" of Tucano and Geremoabo, State of Bahia; and the "caranda" or "carandayba" fan leaf palm, *C. australis*, which grows in the State of Mato Grosso, Brazil, and in Paraguay. In a taxonomic revision of this typically American genus of palms, Dahlgren & Glassman (1961-1963) reported 20 species from the Antillean Islands and 3 from South America. With particular reference to Brazil, these authors reported *C. cerifera* from the dry north-east and *C. alba* Morong from the south-west, considering *C. australis* as a synonym of the latter.

Zacher (1952) listed *Pachymerus coperniciae* Bondar as associated with *C. australis*, but a careful reading of the papers by Bondar (1931, 1931a, 1937, 1941, 1943) cited by Zacher revealed that no mention was made of this bruchid, its host palm, or even the place of collecting. From the above bibliographic data and because of doubt about the occurrence of *P. thoracicus* in Bahia, I did not include this species in my paper on Brazilian palm bruchids (Silva 1977).

However, I worked up the following 3 hypotheses: (I) the 2 specimens of this bruchid could not have been collected in Bahia where *Copernicia alba* does not occur; the host palm was cited in the label transcribed by Prevett (1966) as "*Copernicia orientalis*" (*incertae sedis*); (II) G. Bondar had (*in litt.*) named *P. coperniciae*, and probably the specimens would be in his insect collection and/or registered in his notebook in possession of the

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American Museum of Natural History, N.Y., curated by Patricia Vaurie; and (III) the label by Bondar was incorrect, difficult to properly read as detected by myself on other occasions, or labels were changed while handling the specimens.

Hypothesis (II) was confirmed in a letter from Vaurie, dated 10 June, 1977, as follows: "4615 *Pachymerus coperniciae* n.sp. (the *coperniciae* is crossed out with a pen). In *Copernicia australis*, seeds, bruchid from A. A. Barbiellini. Differs by the antenna, elytra, and posterior pair of legs. Bahia 15/3/44. 2 to London in 14/4/49—(not in British Museum). 3/7/59, 2 ex. to Zacher—(not in Br. Mus.)" (From Bondar notebook data translated from Portuguese into English; comments in parentheses by Vaurie). "These entries were made in different ink, evidently at the different dates given. It looks as if he had planned to name it and did not do so" (Comment by Vaurie). Barbiellini evidently received these adult bruchids from someone who collected/bred them in the typical growing areas of *C. alba* (State of Mato Grosso in Brazil, Paraguay, northern Argentina, eastern Bolivia; fig.

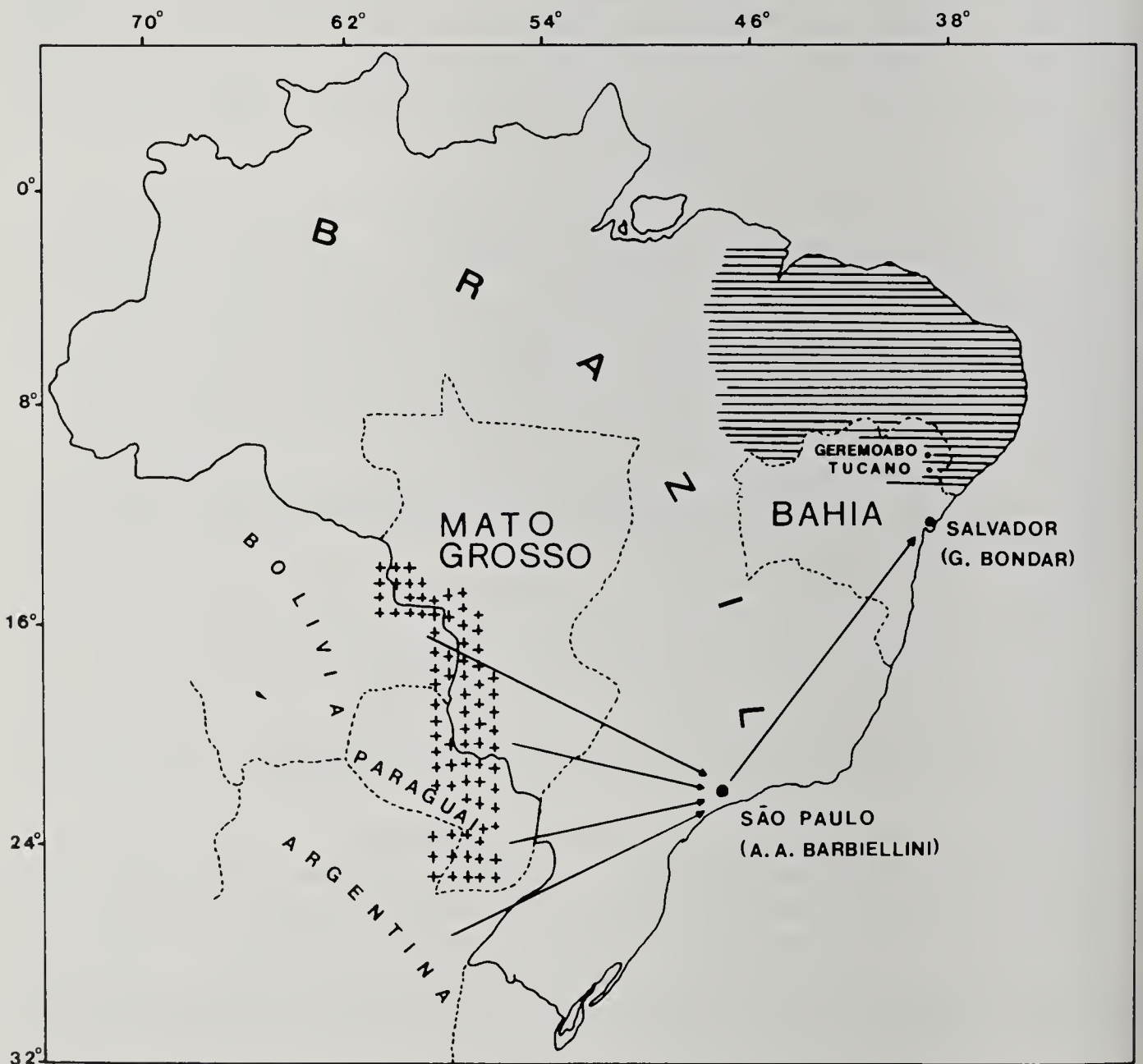


Fig. 1, The distributions of *Copernicia cerifera* (bars) and *C. alba* (crosses) in Brazil and neighboring countries, with particular reference to Bahia and Mato Grosso. The arrows show the hypothetical origins and routes of transmittal followed by the 2 "Bahia" specimens of *Pachymerus thoracicus* under discussion.

1). He must have sent them to Bondar for identification since Bondar was consultant and author of entomological papers for the magazine *Chacaras e Quintais* (São Paulo) edited by Barbiellini.

Hypothesis (III) is also valid because Bondar's label data as cited by Prevett (1966) conflicts with the data in Bondar's notebook concerning the names of the collector and host plant. Prevett also erred in reporting "Bahia" as being the locality where the 2 specimens of *P. thoracicus* were collected. In reality, the species was named *in litt.* by Bondar at Bahia (Salvador City) as *P. coperniciae* which became a *nomen nudum* when published by Zacher (1952). The name *coperniciae* is herein treated as a name in synonymy and has no standing in nomenclature.

In conclusion, during my intensive rearing program for palm seed bruchids during the last 8 years in the State of Bahia, Brazil, no examples of *P. thoracicus* have emerged from seeds of *Copernicia*.

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